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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAMAKO 000446

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [ML](#)  
SUBJECT: TUAREG CLAIMS AND COUNTER-CLAIMS FOR RECENT ATTACKS

REF: A. BAMAKO 00435  
[1](#)B. BAMAKO 00419

Classified By: Political Officer Aaron Sampson, Embassy Bamako, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(C) Summary: Two Tuareg groups have claimed responsibility for the May 12 attack on the gendarme base in the town of Ansongo to the east of Gao (Ref. A). One claim was issued by Hama ag Sid'Ahmed, the Paris-based spokesman of the Northern Mali Tuareg Alliance for Change (ATNMC) and Ibrahim Bahanga's father-in-law. Sid'Ahmed also claimed responsibility for the May 6 attack in Diabali which was orchestrated by the Tuareg rebel Alliance for Democracy and Change (ADC). Speaking on his own behalf, Bahanga has denied any involvement. The other, more credible claim for the Ansongo attack is from a new Tuareg group led by former rebel Akly ag Iknan and Ahmoudou Badi, a convicted murderer turned escaped prisoner. There are now four known Tuareg militias operating in northern Mali. Each one of these militias appears to draw from specific Tuareg fractions or sub-groups, suggesting significant internal divisions within Mali's Tuareg population and reinforcing concerns that Mali may soon face multiple Tuareg militias each rebelling for overlapping, yet different, reasons. End Summary.

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Like Father (in-Law), Like Son...Or Not  
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2.(C) Ibrahim Bahanga's father-in-law and ATNMC spokesman Hama ag Sid'Ahmed claimed responsibility for the May 6 attack against the Malian military post in Diabali (Ref. B) as well as for the May 12 attack against the gendarme base in Ansongo. Speaking for himself, Bahanga denied involvement with either attack and reiterated his respect for a cease-fire agreement with the Malian government that apparently expires on May 25 (Ref. C). On May 15 a Malian newspaper made light of the contradictory statements emanating from the ATNMC by asking: "Who should we believe? The Father, the Son, or the Holy peace-loving Malian State that says nothing at all?"

3.(C) This is not the first time the Paris-based Sid'Ahmed has released statements on the ATNMC's behalf that were immediately repudiated by ATNMC leaders actually on the ground in northern Mali. Sid'Ahmed's declarations likely represent nothing more than a clumsy attempt to position the ATNMC as the lead group in northern Mali's increasingly complicated matrix of rebel movements. We continue to believe that the May 6 attack in Diabali was orchestrated by members of the ADC and that the May 12 attack in Ansongo was the work of an Imghad Tuareg group based in the region of Gao.

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4.(C) On May 14 a statement claiming responsibility for the May 12 Ansongo attack was posted to a Kidal Tuareg website under the name of Akly ag Iknan, a Imghad Tuareg who belonged to the Revolutionary Army for the Liberation of the Azawad (ARLA) during the rebellion of the 1990s. Ag Iknan is an associate of Ahmoudou Badi, another Imghad Tuareg believed to have participated in the Ansongo attack. Badi was sentenced to life in prison in 2004 for the 1999 carjacking and murder of a Danish national employed by Maersk shipping. Badi escaped in 2006 when authorities brought him to Bamako's main hospital for medical consultations. Although Badi has been a fugitive for nearly two years, there is no evidence of an attempt by the Malian government to recapture him.

5.(U) The statement rejected any links to the ADC or the ATNMC, and said the attack was carried out in the name of Tuaregs from the Imghad fraction located in the region of Gao. The author claimed to have captured four all-terrain vehicles, 3 Dakterioff machine guns, 45 Chinese made semi-automatic weapons, 6 AK-47 assault rifles, 15 cases containing 150 60mm mortar rounds, 20 cases of 14.5mm ammunition rounds, 75 cases containing 52,000 rounds of AK-47 ammunition, and 15 cases containing 10,500 rounds of 7.65mm ammunition. The statement, which also provided Iknan's satellite telephone number, encouraged other Imghads to join Iknan and threatened a "vast plan of attacks" in coming days to "disprove those who dismiss the Imghad as incapable."

BAMAKO 00000446 002 OF 002

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Comment: Rebelling Against the Government and Each Other

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6.(C) There are now four known Tuareg militia groups operating in northern Mali. Each of these appear to draw their membership from specific Tuareg fractions or ethnic sub-groups. ADC members belong primarily to the Ifoghas group of Kidal Tuaregs. The ATNMC is dominated by individuals from the Ifergoumessen fraction of Tuareg Ifoghas based in Tinzwaten. Followers of Merzouk ag Acherif's band seem to be mostly Idnane Tuaregs from Tessalit. The group that attacked Ansongo, meanwhile, consisted of Imghad Tuaregs from the region of Gao and Menaka. The ethnic nature of each of these groups indicates significant internal divisions within Mali's Tuareg population - a development that may seriously complicate attempts to map a peaceful return to the framework of the Algiers Accords since each group seems to be rebelling for overlapping, yet different, reasons. The Ifergoumessen of the ATNMC, for instance, are likely rebelling not only against the Malian military but also against what they perceive as a history of domination by fellow Tuaregs from the Ifoghas tribe. The same presumably holds for the Idnane following Merzouk and the Imghads aligned with ag Iknan. A decision by Algeria to resume its mediation efforts may be the only way to keep these long-standing internal disputes from escalating. A quick move by the Algerians would also be noted by other northern groups - whether Tuareg, Arab or Songhai - harboring similar perceived grievances against the Malian government and one another.

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